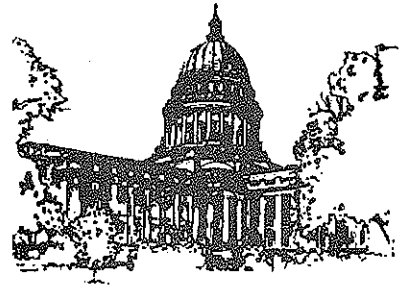


# MARY WILLIAMS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 87<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**Committees:** Property Rights (Chair) • Tourism, Recreation and State Properties (Vice Chair) • Natural Resources • Agriculture Forestry • Rural Economic Development • Rules Committee



February 6, 2007

Madame Chair, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill, AB 36.

This piece of legislation was originally brought to me on behalf of staff within the division of Urban and Community Forestry of the DNR. They are the ones within the department that actually work with providing aid for these instances. After experiencing recent storms in Ladysmith and Siren, they felt constricted by the bureaucratic process the state statutes currently dictate for communities seeking assistance in replacing trees destroyed by a catastrophic storm event.

This bill will help us provide real relief and help to those communities that are affected by a catastrophic storm by cutting through the bureaucratic red tape and allowing help to come sooner, rather than later.

As some of you may remember, on Labor Day of 2002, a tornado ripped through the community of Ladysmith in my district. Damages were estimated at over \$20 million. Part of this was damage to trees, many of which were blown over, splintered, or even completely uprooted as a result of the tornado.

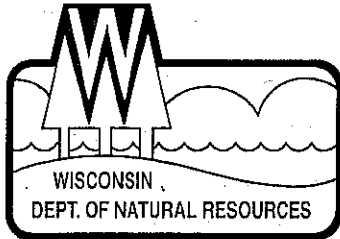
Under our current system, when communities such as Ladysmith are affected by a catastrophic storm, they have to apply for a DNR urban forestry grant to repair and replace their trees during the established grant cycle. Applications are due October 1st and are awarded in late December of that year. If a community is hit in late fall or winter, they have a long wait for aid. Also, they already have to use so much of their resources to restore critical infrastructure that they do not always have enough left to provide the required 50 % matching funds needed for the grant.

This bill will provide a new process for replacing trees specifically damaged by a catastrophic storm event. For areas designated a disaster area by the governor, aid will be approved or denied within 60 days of application. It does not require communities to contribute matching funds yet it will not increase yearly state costs. Restoring the beauty of these areas in a timely manner can be invaluable to the process of getting the community back on its feet. I hope you members of the committee will give it your full support. I would like to thank Don Kissinger, Dick Rideout, and everyone else within the Department of Natural Resources who helped on this. I would also like to thank Jim Warren who will be testifying and can answer questions you may have.

Thank you.

Representative Mary Williams





## State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Jim Doyle, Governor  
Scott Hassett, Secretary

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### Assembly Bill 36

Committee on Homeland Security and State Preparedness

Department of Natural Resources Testimony  
James Warren, Lands Section Chief, Bureau of Forest Management  
Division of Forestry  
February 6, 2007

Thank you Chair Ballweg and Committee Members:

Good morning. My name is Jim Warren and I am the Chief of Forest Lands with the Bureau of Forest Management in the Department of Natural Resources' Division of Forestry. I appreciate this opportunity to appear before you to discuss AB 36.

The Department of Natural Resources strongly supports AB 36. The bill allows the Department to react quickly and provide financial grant assistance to communities who have experienced extensive damage to their urban trees due to a major storm event, but would be ineligible for FEMA assistance under current rules. Since 1990 there have been 14 natural disasters that caused significant damage to thousand of trees in the urban areas of Wisconsin. In recent years, major storms have devastated urban trees in Ladysmith, Stoughton, Viola, Siren and the Fox cities.

The bill will allow for a more flexible application timeline for storm damage assistance grants than is currently required for other urban forestry grants. It will also eliminate the 50 percent local cost-share requirement. The removal of the cost-share requirement for these specific grants will reduce the paperwork required by the recipient and ease the strain on local budgets during a time of emergency.

I'd like to give you two examples of where this bill would have helped communities in need. In June of 2001 a large thunderstorm complex ripped through the Fox cities with winds exceeding 70 mph. Exactly one week later a tornado roared through Burnett county and the village of Siren. Thousands of community trees were damaged or destroyed by these storms. The DNR provided technical assistance, but was unable to provide immediate funding to help repair, remove or replace the trees. The legislature ear-marked \$95,000 to provide emergency urban forestry grants for communities in Burnett, Outagamie and Winnebago counties, but unfortunately the funds were added to our regular urban forestry grant program. This meant that the communities would have to follow the rules to apply for the grants and match the grants 50-50. The documentation of the match was a tremendous burden on the communities who were literally trying to dig themselves out of a storm. It caused great frustration with the DNR and also caused us and the local legislator's great frustration. We worked it out, but not without some hard feelings. Exactly the opposite of what we and the legislators were hoping for.

The August 2005 tornado in Stoughton is another example. The Governor declared a state of emergency, but the President did not declare a disaster. This meant that FEMA funds were not available. Again DNR provided technical assistance, but could not provide urban forestry funds. The timing was excellent for local governments to apply for an urban forestry grant, but the application and match requirements were too difficult for them to meet in the 1 month they had to apply. In both cases, were the statute change in

AB 36 in place, we could have responded with grants within 3 weeks or less to help repair, remove or replace the trees.

In conclusion, if AB 36 becomes law, the department will continue to use its authority and expertise to monitor grant projects, assuring funds are used specifically for storm related tree restoration, tree removal and/or replacement. If this legislation becomes law, the Department will promulgate the required changes to the Administrative Rules for the urban forestry grant program.

The Department urges this Committee to support AB 36.

I appreciate this opportunity to express the Department's support for AB 36 and would be glad to answer any questions you might have.



City of  
**BELOIT**, Wisconsin  
Public Works Operations

February 6, 2007

Dear Committee Members on Homeland Security and State Preparedness,

This letter is in support of 2007 Assembly Bill 36 – an act to provide municipalities grants for the costs of saving, removing or replacing trees damaged in a catastrophic storm event in the urban forestry.

The City of Beloit has a substantial investment in our urban forest that consists of 35,000 terrace, parks, cemetery, and golf course trees. The City has an exceptional community forestry program, whereby the National Arbor Day Foundation has just awarded the City of Beloit as Tree City USA! The City has recognized the importance of trees that provide clean air, conserve water and soil and bring nature into our resident's daily lives. Trees have been a vital part of our community, providing both economical and environmental benefits.

In closing, I want to applaud the Committee for its' proactive stance in creating Assembly Bill 36.

Sincerely,

Bruce Slagoski  
Terrace Tree Supervisor  
City of Beloit Department of Public Works

CC: Larry Arft, City Manager  
Laura Wyatt, DNR



**Shannon, Pam**

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**From:** Williams, Vincent  
**Sent:** Friday, February 09, 2007 12:56 PM  
**To:** Shannon, Pam  
**Subject:** FW: ASSEMBLY BILL # 36

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**From:** Charles Mortensen [mailto:comortensen@charter.net]  
**Sent:** Friday, February 02, 2007 1:36 PM  
**To:** Rep.Ballweg  
**Subject:** ASSEMBLY BILL # 36

Dear Representative Ballweg,

As a member of the Janesville Shade Tree Advisory Committee, I am writing in support of Assembly Bill #36--"Grants for Catastrophic Damage to Urban Forests."

In Janesville, we have previously experienced high wind damage and loss of trees to our urban forest and did secure a Storm Replacement Grant from Alliant Energy to partially mitigate the damage through planting of trees on several street terraces.

We have recently become a "Tree City USA" and will receive the WI. Arborist Assoc. Gold Leaf Award in February '07. I believe this indicates our interest in maintaining and enhancing Janesville's urban forest. Passage of Assembly Bill #36 will be important to all communities in Wisconsin should they experience tree losses and/or damage emanating from catastrophic winds.

You and your committee are to be congratulated for introducing this legislation, which will help rebuild the urban forest, after catastrophic events, and the many inherent values it represents.

Sincerely,

Charles O. Mortensen  
Janesville, WI

1. The first part of the report  
describes the general situation  
of the country and the  
main problems.

2. The second part of the report  
describes the results of the  
survey and the conclusions  
drawn from it.

3. The third part of the report  
describes the recommendations  
made by the committee.

4. The fourth part of the report  
describes the implementation of the  
recommendations and the progress  
made.

5. The fifth part of the report  
describes the future plans of the  
committee and the government.  
The sixth part of the report  
describes the conclusions of the  
committee and the government.

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describes the conclusions of the  
committee and the government.



**Shannon, Pam**

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**From:** Williams, Vincent  
**Sent:** Friday, February 09, 2007 12:56 PM  
**To:** Shannon, Pam  
**Subject:** FW: Assembly Bill 36 Hearing

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**From:** John Gall [mailto:JGall@wachteltree.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, February 02, 2007 9:37 AM  
**To:** Rep.Ballweg; Rep.Kerkman; Rep.Musser; Rep.Hines; Rep.Petersen; Rep.Sinicki; Rep.Schneider;  
Rep.Ziegelbauer; Rep.Benedict; Rep.Vukmir; Rep.Pridemore  
**Subject:** Assembly Bill 36 Hearing

Chairperson Ballweg, Members of the Committee on Homeland Security and State Preparedness,  
Representatives Vukmir and Pridemore,

I am writing you to voice my support for AB-36 "Grants for Catastrophic Damage Caused to Urban Forests". Unfortunately the hearing scheduled for Tuesday February 6, 2007 coincides with the annual Wisconsin Arborist Association/Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources Urban Forestry Conference in Green Bay. Because of this scheduling conflict, I and many other supporters of this Bill will not be available to testify before your committee in support of this legislation.

I have been involved in the field of urban forestry for over 32 years. During that time, first as a city forester and now as a consultant to municipalities, I have either personally witnessed or have involved in managing the cleanup of countless severe storms damaging our urban forests. I have seen firsthand the financial strain that can be placed on a municipality's budget.

Passage of this bill will lessen that financial hardship on those communities that have the unfortunate luck of experiencing a catastrophic storm.

I request that each of you to support passage of this legislation, and urge you to contact other Representatives and State Senators to sign on as co-sponsors of this most important piece of legislation.

Thank you for your time in this matter.

*John T. Gall*

*John T. Gall*  
Special Projects Coordinator  
Certified Municipal Specialist  
Certified Arborist #WI-0249AM

**Wachtel Tree Science and Service**

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02/09/2007



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*John T. Gall*

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Certified Municipal Specialist  
Certified Arborist #WI-0249AM

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